SIGHT AND SOUND

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CONTRIBUTORS: Douglas Slocombe Andrew Buchanan Herman G. Weinberg William Hunter R. S. Miles Stuart Black K. K. Murthy Frederic Evans

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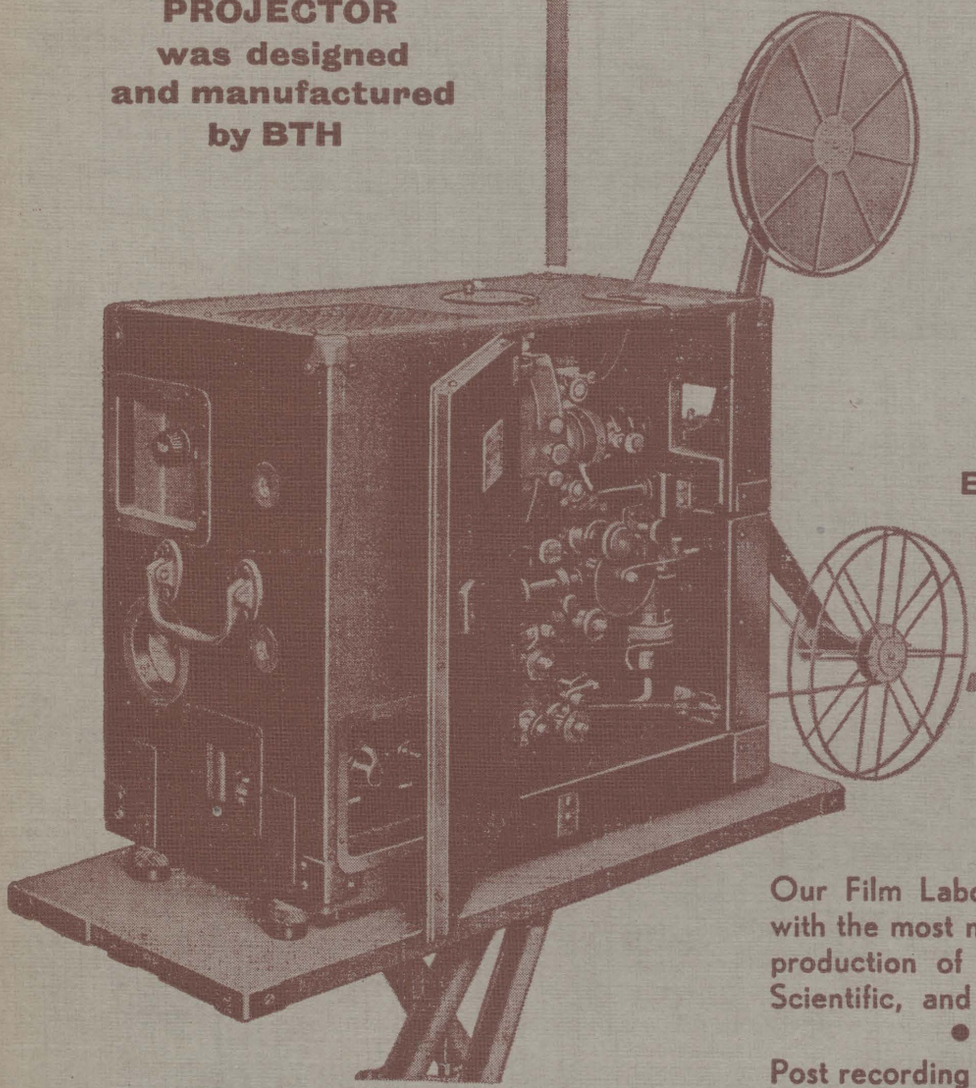

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TO READERS

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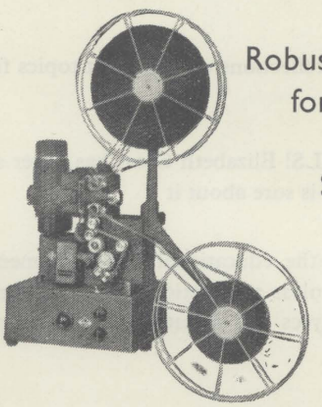

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NEWS REEL

Comments of the Quarter by SIGHT AND SOUND Contributors

Berlin's Gains

If Reichspropagandaminister Goebbels allows, the German people, for the first time for many years, will see a Disney. Prior to the war one of the greatest griefs of German film fans was that they had not been able to see any Silly Symphonies for three or four years and some had only heard of Donald Duck! Opinion was divided as to whether it was because they might create bad thoughts in otherwise good Nazi bosoms or because foreign exchange was too valuable to fritter away on a laugh and had to be reserved for sterner (and harder) stuff. During the invasion of Austria the haul of foreign films generally at Vienna was insignificant but after the occupation of Prague there was great joy in the Reichsfilmarchiv that the Gestapo had collared quite a few films of which they had read good notices in the foreign papers but had never seen. With the capture of so many countries and with the rapid overrunning of France the hauls of film must have been enormous and there is no doubt that when not editing fresh *Baptisms of Fire* jubilant Berlin civil servants are having the time of their lives viewing the products of the plutocracies.

Perhaps when they have digested them, we shall have German versions prepared for home and overseas consumption of the latest spate with which Britain has been deluged of films on American History. They will no doubt lay in those of the War of Independence more emphasis than Hollywood has on the fact that the bad men euphemistically referred to as Tories are in fact the good old British Army.

At Amiens the Germans also found a number of brand new 35 mm. non-flam. copies of British documentaries including the Petroleum Films Bureau's latest productions such as *Cargo for Ardrossan*. Perhaps from these documentaries with their fidelity to fact, the German bomber command is taking stills to enable their pilots to recognise their position.

Films for Overseas

Further attempts by the British Council to secure sympathetic co-operation from the Ministry of Information have met with partial success. One result of the discussions has been that the Films Department of the Council has received a Treasury grant in order to enable it to continue the work which the unfortunate attitude of the Ministry had managed to delay for three months. Within a week of the grant Mr. Neville Kearney, one of the Trade Governors of the British Film Institute, had been appointed Director and steps were being taken to initiate a programme of film production designed to show to overseas countries, the Empire as well as the foreigners, the characteristics of Britain. Some of the films deal with the country and its people; others, like the one on Oxford University, with the continuity of learning in this country and its adaptation to the changing conditions in the world. Others are concerned with the industrial activity of Britain and others again, such as those on British architecture or industrial design, with the more artistic side of our nature.

A second excellent achievement of the Council has been to persuade the news reel companies to circulate to the Colonies the very excellent composite weekly news reel which in the first instance they compile for exhibition in the British Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The reel, which is slightly longer than that normally shown in the ordinary theatre at home, is built up by each company in turn out of all the material at the disposal of the members of the News Reel Association irrespective of who originally took the pictures. Thus every week there is put out a first-class survey of Britain and its activity. The question has been asked as to why, though this reel was being regularly turned out till last October, ten months had to elapse before it was utilised for wider national purposes. But no satisfactory answer has been returned from the London University building. Nor as to why it should not go to the Dominions and foreign countries.

A Central Film Library

There is a strong and apparently well-founded report in circulation to the effect that the Ministry of Information Films Division has determined to set up a central film library which will act as the pool of films from which their big scheme of non-theatrical distribution will be supplied. By arrangement with the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association this distribution will take the form of travelling cinema units using the same technique as was developed by the Gas and Oil industries for circulating the many propaganda and documentary type films which owing to their assumed lack of entertainment value rarely found a place on the theatrical screen. We understand that these mobile vans will put on in villages and elsewhere a single feature programme in which the supporting material will be war-effort films. At the same time, by giving away a certain number of projectors to communal centres, it is hoped to increase the extent of the non-theatrical demand, at the moment mainly confined to the schools. An interesting feature of the library scheme, films from which will naturally be supplied free, is that in addition to the purely propaganda films from the Ministry of Information and other Government Departments, it will take in the existing material of the Empire and G.P.O. Film Libraries. There is also a suggestion that if the Board of Education's authority can be obtained one section shall be purely educational and, like the existing Scottish Regional Film Library run under the British Film Institute's Scottish Film Council, shall only contain films of proved and approved

educational worth. Should the scheme come into operation, it can only be hoped that at least the educational side is not allowed to lapse after the war when probably in the general scheme of retrenchment the Ministry of Information and all its officials will vanish again into the void from whence they came.

Teaching English

But for the withdrawal of the B.E.F. from France a serious attempt might have been made to use films to give the army a working knowledge of French. Several area education officers had expressed a strong view that films should be used to illustrate the syllabus that had been got out. Before the thing could be got going the period of waiting was past and nobody had time to consider further a valuable but not vital experiment.

As an extension of the same idea the Institute is pressing strongly that special films should be made under the auspices of the British Council in order to teach English to foreigners. This goes one better than the Germans who have never been greatly concerned with sound films. If they had, there is no doubt they would have produced and given away a language series in the same way as they have given away hundreds of copies of their ordinary educational films. Twelve indeed were presented to the Government of South Australia where they still enjoy continuous showing as they were given free and not charged for. The English films in the State Film Library get not so good a circulation since they were charged for in the first place, and therefore carry a service fee! These German films are good teaching value, are known from their titlings to be German-made and are therefore good general pro-Nazi propaganda. Teaching films showing a conversation in an English setting could similarly be good propaganda for the presentation of England and by increasing the number of people who can understand spoken English enhance the value of English broadcasts, increase the value of British films and double the use of British lectures by enabling the expert rather than the linguist to be the lecturer.

The Schools Campaign

Within a few weeks it is anticipated that the British Film Institute will be in a position to publish the Report and Recommendations of their special Educational Campaign which was undertaken last March at the suggestion of the Board of Education and financed by a grant from the Sunday Cinematograph Fund of the Privy Council. The campaign came to an end slightly earlier than had been intended owing to the fresh upheaval caused by the second evacuations. At the same time during the period that they had been at work, the four organisers had been able to visit all the Directors and many of the projector-owning schools in their areas. They had given too a number of demonstrations to members of Education Committees who had never seen an educational film before and had never realised its potentialities, to teachers to explain the method and technique of using films, while they had also managed to visit a number of training colleges, most of whom strangely enough make no attempt to use films, and give the teachers-to-be a little indication of what they might expect to find and what might be expected of them in most of the schools to which they will be attached. As a result of their visits all over the country a great deal of material has been collected showing the principal reasons for not using and sometimes for the misusing of optical aids. Should the situation justify it the Governors intend to try and obtain some extra money in order to allow the recommendations to be followed up.

Trials and Troubles

The very success of the National Film Library has landed it in financial difficulties. Its collection is now so important that no risks can be taken. Accordingly, as mentioned in our last issue, it acquired a property at Aston Clinton near Aylesbury and built its first batch of a dozen temperature controlled vaults. These have been so good at keeping the variations of temperature within the proper limits that as a matter of courtesy the Institute granted an urgent request from the Office of Works for the use of a couple of them in which to store some of their more precious films of the last war. But this has meant that there is no more room for storing the new films which are regularly flowing into the Library, especially now as full a record as possible of the times must be kept. Within the next month or two £450 must be found for a new block of vaults, yet neither the Pilgrim Trustees nor the Rockefeller Foundation can find it in their hearts to help, the British Government are naturally too concerned with direct war effort to be susceptible to a request of a cultural nature and mortgages are hard to raise. Nevertheless the quest for ways and means continues.

At the same time only a trifle less urgent than that of a new set of vaults, is the need for commencing on the minimum of technical measures for preserving the existing material. This too will cost money, and the Governors of the Institute are seeking ways and means of finding it, but once again the Trusts have buttoned up their pockets. It is a dismal thought that the lamp of culture is burning so low that until things are easier nobody is prepared to put up £2,000 a year to preserve for posterity these unique and priceless records of forty years of history. If this work is to come to nought through lack of money, then our present age and generation can proudly rank itself with the most smug and short-sighted vandals of Victorian times.

Colonial Effort

Mention has been already made of the distribution of "British News" to the Colonies through the good offices of the British Council so that the picture theatres may be well supplied with authentic news from home which has not been re-edited in New York. It is now learnt that the Films Division of the Ministry of Information are taking very seriously the education of the African native and have decided to spend some of the half million which rumour speaks of as their allocation for the present year, on making films by and for him. They have therefore a unit at work in Nigeria shooting busily. The material thus taken will be edited in this country into specially slow-moving films for Africa. Possibly the Division has also in mind using some of the cut-outs to show the home country something of its colonies and dependencies. In this case the effort would be doubly useful for, interesting and valuable as is the showing of the African native to the native African, it is equally important to keep on reminding the British public of the extent and the resources of their overseas empire and of their responsibilities in respect of it, for the intense loyalty of the Colonies frequently fails to find any reciprocity here.

BLUE BIRDS

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

Even in the midst of war there must be hope and a universal propaganda for the future of mankind . . .

WAR DISTRACTS men from their ambitions, careers, devotions to cultural pursuits—all of which are laid aside "until after the war"—when, for numerous tragic reasons, they are often not resumed.

Consider this fact in relation to filmdom. Hovering over the screens of all nations is the gospel of propaganda—an indispensable factor to belligerents and neighbourly neutrals alike. Be it British, French, German or American propaganda, it is invariably and understandably *national* in character, devised to cater solely for the present emergency.

It could hardly be otherwise—*or could it?*

Unfortunate Confusion

Leave that question for a moment, and consider the need for deeper spiritual values, and their conspicuous absence on the screen.

Prior to the war, great progress was being made in the production of religious films. It is true they were mainly devised for projection in church halls, and were quite unsuitable for commercial cinemas, but out of those efforts would surely have come the religious film with wider vision —the undenominational film dealing with fundamentals, designed for general release. The very words "religious films" help to perpetuate the error that religion is something apart from everyday life, whereas it is, or should be, an integral part of the daily round, influencing all business, social and domestic relationships. Unfortunately mankind had confused religion with religions.

Religion is no national product, nor does any country hold a monopoly of spiritual qualities. Merely do some leaders interfere with the freedom of the spirit more than others.

Now, how does that fit in with present-day policies?

What is propaganda propagating, spiritual or national values? Should not these merge? Should not the serving of God result in the serving of the country in which one was born? Does it?

Is national propaganda enough?

That is the core of the matter—indeed, the core of *all* matters, and it forms a challenge to be levelled at all media, though here we are concerned only with film.

A High Ideal

Surely the most urgent need of the day is propaganda for the enlightenment of all humanity—propaganda rising high above the divided nations.

Might not such propaganda have emanated from religious films if they had continued to improve and been planned for audiences beyond church halls? Instead, as far as I can tell, such productions have been stopped "until after the war".

Where then should we look for evidence of universal propaganda? Turn to America—the non-belligerent which has discovered how to make full use of the screen for its own purpose—to project no less an object than America. Today, there is evidence that it is broadening its vision and producing "propaganda for mankind". The fact that such propaganda is proving to be a commercial proposition is in no way derogatory—in fact, it is a great advantage for it shows that higher viewpoints do not result in lower receipts. Here are two examples : First, *Mr. Smith goes to Washington.* Is it not a religious film of the first order ? It possesses fine qualities which, collectively, indict materialism, and few of us in any country can escape its scorn. The greatness of Lincoln—his ideals, his vision are presented to audiences beyond America and the response is immediate because it is a story of fundamentals common to all. It is the best kind of religious film because it is neither classified nor recognised as such, and because it was designed to reach the masses.

A Revolutionary Film

Second, Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird.* I should like every maker of religious films, and every producer of national propaganda to see this film at least twice. I consider it carries religion in the widest, finest sense of that word right into the heart of the public, and that it supersedes national propaganda by its rare quality and its universal appeal at a time when barriers are becoming stronger. Apart from such technical considerations as photography, colour, or the acting of Shirley Temple, was it not brave to build up a great feature out of the simple allegorical story of a child's search for happiness? It is more than refreshing—it is revolutionary.

Shirley Temple is not a little *American* girl. She is the daughter of any family in any country. She symbolises all those people who are for ever seeking the cause of their unhappiness in vain because they do not search within themselves. Greedy, selfish, luxury-loving, dishonest idolisers of material strength, these individuals are just like nations because they constitute them. Fortunately, the girl finds the Blue Bird, and shares her method of discovery with the audience. That is important! There is not a nation which would not respond to this film because, of course, it is universal in appeal. In that direction lies peace, too. Imagine the reception which German propaganda films would receive in, say, Britain—or British ones in Germany! Compare that exaggerated simile with the message of the *Blue Bird*, and recall the reasons why it would be completely acceptable to *all* nations. In that simple example lies the secret for which mankind is seeking an answer. We need to remember that the *Blue Bird* is not a Red, White and Blue Bird, nor a fiercely frowning Eagle, nor are its wings even Star-spangled. Actually, it is the only bird to be found everywhere, or lost anywhere. Climate does not affect it. Behaviour does.

It soars over all national boundaries, yet it will nest near to all.

Recently, Maeterlinck, now an old man, arrived penniless in America. He brought two Blue Birds with him which were not, of course, permitted to enter the country.

What a headline: THE BLUE BIRD BANNED BY CIVILISATION!

I Once Scared the Wits Out of Goebbels

Cameraman Douglas Slocombe looks back over ten months of War

IN LOOKING back over a year's filming experiences in Danzig, Poland, France, Luxembourg and Holland I am surprised to find myself immediately confronted with the more amusing incidents which occurred during these trips and not at all by the dozens of serious—and sometimes painfully dangerous—ones. In Danzig, for instance, where I photographed the events up to a month before the outbreak of war, I don't necessarily recall the time when I was arrested with my wife and thrown into the bleak vaults of the Gestapo; or the time when an angry mob of brownshirts threatened to beat me up. But what I do remember vividly—and always will—is the occasion of Herr Doctor Goebbels' short visit to the "Freie" Stadt.

Goebbels, I remember, arrived on a Saturday evening to the intense joy of all the party members and the utter dismay of the average citizen. Flags and banners were displayed everywhere. Official Danzig was intent on demonstrating "spontaneously" its affection and extreme devotion to the Third Reich. The Propaganda Minister was driven through the streets of Danzig under heavy escort and at a speed carefully calculated by Herr Himmler to defeat the accuracy of any bomb-thrower. The crowd was well trained and almost delirious.

Goebbels was first of all entertained to a Wagnerian evening at the stately opera-house and subsequently gave an "impromptu" speech from the elaborately floodlit balcony to a tightly thronged square.

The next morning, there was to be a private assembly of the Brownshirt and Schutztaffel chiefs in the same hall. Foerster (the ex-baker boy gauleiter) and Greiser (leader of the Senate) were to speak first, after which Goebbels would harangue them on the splendour of the new Germany and incite them to renew their activities in preparing Danzig for its glorious inclusion in Greater Germany.

Useful Refreshments

I made every effort to obtain a pass to attend this meeting, but discovered that only one pass was being issued to the foreign press and this was certainly not being given to me, since I was at that time under heavy suspicion and had only a few days previously been released from the Gestapo. As it happened, luck was my way. The gentleman to whom the pass had been issued, whilst refreshing himself with Danzig's most famous (and potent) liquor, finally succumbed to the intoxicating fumes of Machhandel (as it was called) and had to be carried home. It was not difficult while putting him to bed to acquire a certain blue-and-white card from the inner left-hand pocket of his jacket. Incidentally, my conscience has always remained clear over this issue since my victim only woke up two days later and by this time Goebbels was already back in Berlin.

The difficulty now remained of attempting to smuggle the movie camera into the opera house. I decided that the best thing to do was to arrive late and slip in unnoticed if possible. And so, at the appropriate time I rushed in waving my card importantly and forestalling any suspicious questions by asking all the attendants together to escort me in quietly to a position where I would not interrupt the august speaker. I was immediately shown down a line of brownshirts where an empty seat awaited me. Goebbels, meanwhile, was in full swing and was shouting so loudly that I thought the war must already have started. However, on listening more carefully, I discovered that he was merely trying to prove that German culture was superior to any other.

The speaker was standing on a magnificent rostrum which was surrounded by huge clusters of pink and white roses. These led up to a hysterical crescendo in the form of the howling clubfooted dwarf over whose head an enormous golden eagle dangled at a dangerous angle. Behind him, the stage was tightly packed with SS, SA and other Nazi units standing stiffly erect with guns and bayonets. Like all official Nazi meetings, this one also appeared to have the genuine Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer touch!

Shooting Goebbels

Taking a quick look at my neighbours, I noticed with satisfaction that they were all far too happily engrossed in the shouting minister to worry about me. So, taking a deep breath and muttering a silent prayer, I decided to act. Adjusting the camera carefully, I took aim and pressed the trigger. A whirr of machinery, magnified a hundredfold by the admirable acoustics of the opera-house, rent the air. Goebbels swung round and almost fell off his stand, certain that he had been machine-gunned. Then, realising that he was still alive and had no doubt been miraculously saved by his bullet-proof vest, the little minister fumbled a bit for the lost thread of his indictment against Imperialist Britain, and went on with his shouting.

Unfortunately, however, the guards who were so prettily forming part of the beflowered leitmotiv on the stage, were not so easily satisfied. Silently, four of them crept down the gangway to find me. Knowing that if they once got me outside, as they obviously intended, I hadn't a chance, I decided to play safe. As they grabbed my arms, I showed them that I would shout and create a scene in front of Goebbels unless they left me alone. So they let me be, deciding that there would be plenty of time to arrest me as soon as the meeting came to an end.

So I sat back, saved for a few moments and wondered how I was going to make my escape. I couldn't make a dash for the exit yet for the SA men sitting on both sides of me were well aware of the position.

Eventually, Goebbels' speech came to an end. Immediately everyone in the house jumped to their feet and, standing stiffly erect with their hands outstretched in the Nazi salute, first of all heiled victory for about ten minutes, and then sang—with hands still outstretched—the whole gamut of Nazi martial songs. So frantically absorbed were they all that it was a simple matter for me to collect my equipment and, arching my back slightly, make my way under the gallery of saluting arms into the glorious June sunshine outside! When I eventually was arrested later, all my film was already on the way to London and New York.

TIME IN THE SUN

Some Reflections on Films. The arguments about Griffith mentioned by HERMAN G. WEINBERG below are dealt with in a letter from "Experimental Cinema" elsewhere in this issue. Here is news about Chaplin and Disney and a review of Marie Seton's edition of the Eisenstein material—she wrote about it herself in the Autumn 1939 "Sight and Sound"—together with comments on "Of Mice and Men," "I was an Adventuress" and other films

MARCH 3RD, 1940, marked the 25th anniversary of the world première of *The Birth of a Nation*, probably the most famous of all American films. Seymour Stern (who, contrary to my report last winter, has been very much at work during the past three years on a monumental book on Griffith, its director) tried unsuccessfully to secure recognition of this occasion by a gala return showing of this early masterpiece in New York. (In Chicago, Lillian Gish, its star, arranged for a showing there, where it ran for a full month to large attendance.) Communist sympathisers in New York, objecting to the film's anti-Negro stand, were powerful enough to influence any contemplated return showing of the picture. Yet the event did not go entirely unmarked in the East. On the day of the anniversary, the following historic telegram, prepared by Stern, was sent to D. W. Griffith in California from Mamaroneck, N.Y., where Griffith maintained studios from 1920 to 1930, and where he produced many of his major film-works:

> WE THE UNDERSIGNED WISH TO EXTEND OUR HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS AND DEEP FELT GRATITUDE FOR YOUR ACHIEVEMENT IN LAUNCHING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO TODAY AT THE LIBERTY THEATRE IN NEW YORK CITY THE FILM THAT USHERED IN THE DAWN OF A NEW ART WHICH MARKED AN EPOCH IN THE THEATRES OF THE WORLD STOP ON THE OCCASION OF THE QUARTER CENTURY ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF A NATION WE DEEM IT A PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO PAY TRIBUTE EVEN IN THIS INADEQUATE FASHION TO THE MIGHTY CREATIVE VISION THAT RESULTED IN THE SCREENS FIRST GREAT MASTERPIECE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT DEEPENS WITH TIME.
>
> (*Signed*) LILLIAN GISH, RICHARD WATTS, JR., HOWARD BARNES, WILLIAM BOEHNEL, SEYMOUR STERN, THEODORE HUFF, KIRK BOND, TERRY RAMSAYE, LILO OYARZUN, BARNET G. BRAVER-MANN, EDWARD WESTON, AGUSTIN ARAGON LEIVA, FERNANDO ELIZONDO.

Stern's projected book on Griffith will be in two volumes, running well over 1,500 pages (the first volume, *The Birth of an Art*, is finished) and will be encyclopedic in scope, paying special attention to Griffith's 1908-1915 period which Stern calls "the period of pure and unbridled experimentation".

Which calls to mind other projected American books on the films that next season may see, including Lewis Jacobs' text-book on film making, Jay Leyda's book on the history of the Soviet film, Josef von Sternberg's book of memoirs, Kirk Bond's study of film esthetics and, perhaps, even your correspondent's long delayed *Sin and Cinema*, a moral history of the films. I think this is a good time to mention that, at last reports, Eisenstein was reputed still to be working on his vast work on the relation of all the arts to cinema.

Which is another good time to mention that Marie Seton's edition of Eisenstein's Mexican material, which she has called *Time In The Sun*, will be released here in the Autumn, though London may see it before then. She has done an extremely intelligent and sensitive job of editing all the important sequences of *Que Viva Mexico* against a background of authentic Indian and Mexican music and a discreet commentary. This material, with its exquisite imagery and deep lyricism, would be fabulous in any form—but *Time In The Sun* is far closer to Eisenstein than the perverted *Thunder Over Mexico*. At the moment, Miss Seton is planning a short film on the prophetic inventions of the incredible Leonardo da Vinci.

The new Chaplin film, *The Dictator*, is finished, but its release is being held up until Chaplin can decide on how it should end. Almost as eagerly awaited is Disney's *Fantasia*, combining excerpts from *La Sacre du Printemps*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, *Afternoon of a Faun*, *Toccata and Fugue*, *Dance of the Hours*, *Nutcracker Suite*, *A Night on Bald Mountain*, *Ave Maria* and *Claire de Lune*, all welded together into a great orgy of music and image, for which Stokowski has recorded the music and Deems Taylor will act as narrator. Stravinsky, after seeing his *Le Sacre* portion, is reputed to have gone into ecstasies over Disney's new "interpretation" of his music. It is said that Disney's *Bambi*, from the Felix Salten novel, will be postponed to allow him to collaborate with Miguel Covarrubias and Carlos Chavez, the distinguished Mexican painter and composer, respectively, on an historic colour cartoon depicting the early Mayan, Aztec and Toltec civilisations in Mexico. Clearly this will be America's year in the films.

Of Mice and Men, from the Steinbeck novel, proved who should have directed *The Grapes of Wrath*. It was so much more of a creative job, so much lustier as a film than the latter that one could not help but speculate on the really magnificent realisation Lewis Milestone might have given Steinbeck's great tragic novel. Milestone's camera is always more sophisticated than John Ford's, his players always more recognisably human. It is this that gives his work the breath of life.

(*Continued on page* 36)

We Want More Revivals!

Behind this light-hearted plaint of a country cinemagoer is a suggestion which might be taken seriously by exhibitors—especially in these days when so much is being made of a "threatened shortage of product." And, after all, why should repertory cinemas be confined almost exclusively to the big towns? ELIZABETH CROSS writes the article

THERE ARE probably a great many technical reasons why we are not able to have more revivals of worth-while films, but if these can possibly be overcome we shall raise a cheer. Who are we, anyway? Well, we include the regular once-a-week (or more often) filmgoer but chiefly consist of those people who only go to see films they believe to be particularly outstanding either in production, acting or story . . . (perhaps all three, the modern miracle).

The people who really care about the quality of the films they see are in a constant state of missing something. In London there is always the chance that, if you miss a good film at your local cinema, it will appear somewhere fairly near soon and so you can spend a little extra in fares and get a look in. In the country it is a very different story. Once a film has honoured us and we have been tormented by friends who exclaim "But, my dear, it was marvellous, surely you *knew* about it!" and we shuffle our feet and admit that the dog had chewed up the cinema programme with all the forthcoming attractions and that we hadn't been out to see the posters and that anyway our old aunt had been staying the week and never went anywhere, well there you are. Possibly the film does come to a neighbouring town, but buses are few and far between at the best of times and, strangely enough, we don't all own cars and so there goes our second chance.

Panting Hordes

What happens to lots of us is this; by the end of every year we have accumulated a lot of vain regrets for about six or seven outstanding films that we have missed. Usually these are films that have been peculiarly successful and which, so the box office supposes, "everyone" has seen. These are just the films that everyone who hasn't seen is panting to get at, and ones which a great part of their first audience would gladly see again. I know that there are various film societies that go in for revivals, there are also repertory cinemas (all too few) that also make a point of always showing what is worth while. For instance, the well-beloved "Everyman" at Hampstead deserves undying gratitude for its courageous attitude and for its various consultations with its patrons. A revival programme which went by popular vote was a great joy and gave many people the opportunity they had been waiting for. In spite of these various possibilities we, very ordinary folk, still never seem to catch up in our film going. And after all, what if we don't want (or more possibly can't afford) to join societies? What if there isn't a repertory cinema within miles? Our only hope is for the normal cinemas to take part in this revival business.

Sad Fate of Three Little Pigs

Wouldn't it be possible, say once a year, for some representative body, such as the British Film Institute, to issue a short list of really outstanding films with some helpful criticisms or reviews, in order to remind people of what they had missed. Then, after having given enough notice in the local press (so that really stupid country folk with their heads in the cabbage patch will sit up and being to oil their cycles), the various cinemas could give a few days from time to time for showing these films. I cannot believe that the receipts would suffer, for the blind cinema goers would go anyway (nothing could stop them), and the people who do care about quality would grasp at the chance of seeing what they are assured is worth seeing. There are a great many people who have not seen, for instance, *Fury* or *The Petrified Forest*, still more who have missed many of the celebrated Disney's . . . I for instance, have missed by inches nearly all over England, *Snow White*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, and, worst of all, *The Three Little Pigs!* Can you imagine a life more blasted than that? People who *have* seen the pigs are unbearably superior (rather like happy brides just back from a satisfactory honeymoon . . . as if no one else had ever been so clever).

There is no reason to suppose that this year's films are going to be better than last year's . . . though of course we hope they will be. After all, a really satisfactory picture is something highly individual, something that makes a definite contribution to human understanding. Whatever else of excellence is achieved we cannot ever quite repeat some of the moments that made, for instance, *The Good Earth* memorable. It seems a pity that children just reaching an age to appreciate some of these films should never be able to see them. Great acting in the theatre is immortal only by repute, but great films can be used in reality. We take care to preserve worth-while literature from the past . . . a novel is not out of date the year after it has appeared. Why should a film be so evanescent? Many films, like many books, are well forgotten after their first novelty has worn off. In fact we cannot see why good celluloid and nice clean paper were ever spoiled in the first place. Probably almost ninety per cent of films made are well deserving of the scrap heap, but that is no reason why the remaining good ones should join them.

If repertory cinemas can provide revivals, cannot the other cinemas try the experiment? If they don't care to risk the big films couldn't they revive the earlier Disneys, just to see how they took on? (Don't tell me they have, because I still haven't seen *The Three Little Pigs* and I shan't be quiet until I get them.)

CRISIS IN PRODUCTION

The present position and a possible solution

Educational film production—let there be no doubt about it—is in a parlous way. Here is an attempt, by WILLIAM HUNTER of the Dartington Hall Film Unit, to analyse the situation and suggest a possible solution. Correspondence and constructive suggestions will be welcomed by SIGHT AND SOUND, but the impatient should remember that subsidies, however small, are—like Butter in Berlin—difficult to get

NO TEACHER who has watched the output of teaching films since the war began will, I think, deny that the supply of educational films produced in this country is seriously declining. "Crisis" does not seem to me too strong a term to apply to the present situation, nor is it too pessimistic to suggest that the most probable outcome, unless something can be done about it, is a continuing fall and final cessation of serious large scale production. The crisis has of course been accentuated by the war but the situation was well developed some time before the struggle actually began. Now is surely a useful time to consider the achievement of educational film production in Britain, and to investigate the possibilities of preventing an otherwise inevitable decline.

Sources

The sources on which teachers have increasingly drawn during the past five or six years for their supply of classroom films may be grouped roughly under five main heads.

(1) Government propagandist organisations, like the old Empire Marketing Board, the G.P.O. Film Unit, the Empire Film Library.

(2) Commercially sponsored films, different from the first category in that they are mainly concerned to demonstrate the excellence of a particular product or to encourage its use. Good examples of this group are the Petroleum Films Bureau, or the British Commercial Gas Association. Both these categories have the great merit of being available free of charge.

(3) Large scale professional production of classroom films. Gaumont British Instructional, both in the quantity and quality of its output, is the outstanding member of this category.

(4) Smaller scale "semi-professional" production. By this I mean, for example, the Film Unit at Dartington Hall; the films of W. H. George or G. B. D. Salt. Production is on 16 mm. instead of 35 mm., and the work is largely unpaid or privately financed.

(5) Spasmodic amateur production. This group covers an enormous field, most of which must be generally unknown. I would include in it casual records of teachers' travels, or films made by teachers in despair for any other source of supply for the material they need. The output is spasmodic, irregular, and uncertain, and handicapped by lack of means and technical knowledge. But it may well be the only serious source of supply of new teaching films in future.

Some Questions

What is happening to the production from these various groups now? In what ways have they succeeded, and how far has their acceptance by teachers in the past been merely for lack of anything better? How far is any solution of the present critical situation feasible? These are the questions I would like to consider in this article.

Ideally, a classroom film, like every other type of film, should have a definite audience and a definite purpose in mind. Nor should the definite audience of the classroom film be simply "children in school", but "children of such and such an age". A film which is "also suitable for schools" can only approximate to the ideal. There are obvious reasons why the ideal should often fail to be achieved in practice, not the least being the cost of making films for an audience which cannot repay professional production costs. This must clearly apply to propaganda and advertising films generally. Their main objective and their main market tend to be elsewhere. A film on how XYZ silk stockings are made, intended to assist the sale of the said stockings in competition with PQR stockings, is likely to be less valuable on balance than a film made for children on the production and manufacturing process of silk. Similarly, a film of ABC cars will probably teach less about the internal combustion engine than a film made specially for schools to convey this information. Or, more subtly, a film on weather forecasting which must stress the importance in this service of the telephone may well be less valuable than a film which is not limited in this way in its treatment of the subject. In short, sponsored, propagandist, and advertising films have often been a second best alternative for the teacher in the absence of anything more adequate. Many of the more intelligent producers in this category, of course, have attempted successfully to meet the teacher more than half way, and it would be foolish to deny that many excellent films have been made available to schools

through such production units. One need only mention out of many *Transfer of Power*, *Oil from the Earth*, *Weather Forecast*, *Song of Ceylon*, *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *La Magie du Fer Blanc*. But schools are only one of the objectives of the documentary groups, and not necessarily always the main one. At the moment, the skill and experience of many of the best units is directed to quite other activities. The G.P.O. Unit, for instance, has become a department of the Ministry of Information. As far as I can see, the needs of the schools are being very little considered. Some non-government work not directly connected with the war effort is of course going on, but it is clear that by and large there will be fewer films in the future than there have been in the past. As an important source of supply, the future outlook (after the war as well) is, to say the least, precarious.

The Omens Precarious

The future of large scale professional production could also, I think, on present evidence, be described as precarious. G.B. Instructional, for example, have in the past five years produced an admirable collection of specifically teaching films. They are an invaluable beginning. But teachers need hundreds, even thousands, more films in geography, history, biology, science, civics, and so on. The Gaumont British output is declining quantitatively. If the average cost of production is something like £700 a ten minute reel; if prints cost around £3. 10*s*. each, and are hired to schools at 5*s*.; if, given the quality of projection in many schools, you cannot count on more than thirty to fifty projections before a print is worn out, and if you consider the large overheads and running costs of such an undertaking, one reason for the decline is evident. Additional revenue, it is true, accrues from commercial showings, the sale of projectors, etc., but it nevertheless seems to me reasonable to suppose that large scale production of this sort is just as likely to stop as to continue. The former alternative cannot be ignored. The outlook is too insecure to base serious hopes for the future on it.

Meagre Means

I would define as "semi-professional", for lack of a more comprehensive term, those concerns which work directly on 16 mm., and therefore have almost no alternative market to the schools. They are professional in the sense that they compete with professional films for the market, and ideally should produce work indistinguishable from professional 35 mm. work. Output could and should be based on long-term planning, within the framework of such meagre means as they can muster. They are not professional in the sense that they employ paid workers, which means that they operate either as a part-time activity, or are run by people with private means. Their great advantage over professional production proper is the low cost of production. Given experience and capacity, I should say that a first-class 20 minute film (silent) could be made for from £15–50, depending on the subject. Compare this with around £1,400 for a professionally produced sound film running for the same length of time. If my feeling about the future outlook of categories of 1, 2, and 3 above is even approximately correct, then semi-professional production is a serious potential source of future supply. But it is a precarious form of production unless it is subsidised. I believe a good case can be put forward for subsidising this kind of work on a comparatively large scale.

My last group, spasmodic amateur production, might be lumped by some in the same category as the above. I think it is important, however, to distinguish between continuous 16 mm. output and occasional films more often than not made by people who are interested in the subject matter of the film far more than the method of presentation of this matter. Except for an occasional film like B. D. Smith's *Guernsey Granite*, the bulk of this production has only a very limited circulation. An ex-pupil makes a film of his trip through the Himalayas and shows it at the school; someone on the staff knows a man who has some interesting pictures of a tiger hunt; a teacher who has never handled a camera gets a few pounds to make a record of some experiment; these are the sort of things I should describe as spasmodic amateur production. It is inevitable that such films should be made with an inadequate or non-existent knowledge of film technique in the vast majority of cases. It is more inevitable that when the attempt is filmically serious (that is, conceived as a film, not simply as a record) finance is a serious factor militating against success. I was once asked to criticise a film made at a particular school, and after having done so was told that the director only wasted 20 feet out of 200, the total footage allowed! Admirable though this may be as a feat of virtuosity, it is clear that first-class teaching films, at all comparable with professional work, cannot be made on such ratio of film used to film shot. Although it must be unfair to a good deal of such spasmodic work, one may say that this class of production at present is of negligible importance for schools as a whole, since it makes no appreciable difference in quantity or quality to the supply normally available.

There are, it seems to me, two aspects of the above which are of fundamental importance. The first is the financial precariousness of educational film production, especially professional production. The second is the absence of any effective centralised organisation for production. If any constructive consideration of the future is worth while, these are the aspects of the present which seem to me should be studied most closely. Now, with actual production more or less at a standstill, is the time for planning. Students of the history of the film will recall that the early Soviet cinema was so successful partly because the absence of the means of production made paper planning and theoretical discussion the only alternatives to doing nothing at all.

A Possible Solution

All educational production is in a sense sponsored, and inevitably must be. The financial return is too small for it to be otherwise. What is important to realise now is that sponsorship is likely to be withdrawn from a good many types of production, and others will only function in a restricted sense. The problem in short, if the teachers' demands are to continue to be met, is to find some alternative, some more co-ordinated and more permanent form of subsidy, some solution to the financial impasse in which educational production finds itself. Planning in more fields than one will be essential when this war is over; why not then in the field of educational film production?

Any coherent plan for sustained production will have two main aspects—the production of films, and the distribution of the finished article. Here I am primarily concerned with the former aspect. I must suppose, for purposes of discussion, that a subsidy is available. The bodies whose

business it should be to advocate and/or allocate it are, for example, the British Film Institute, the Board of Education, or the Ministry of Information, perhaps in collaboration. All I can advocate here is an outline, however sketchy and inadequate, of a planned national production. Let us suppose, then, that through the initiative of one or other of the above bodies, the sum of £10,000 annually for a period, let us say, of five years, could be made available for the production of educational films, what would be the optimum use that could be made of it? The figure has been chosen more or less at random, as being perhaps the normal annual expenditure of a minor government department on stationery, and being too a respectable sum for the purpose proposed.

Were it available, the first thing that seems to me clear is that production would be confined to 16 mm. At a very conservative estimate we may say that production costs of 16 mm. could be seven or eight times lower than on 35 mm., probably a good deal lower. This clearly means that output on 16 mm. could be increased as against 35 mm. for an equivalent expenditure. Substandard work can (ideally) be indistinguishable from standard, or so little inferior that the difference in quality in no way justifies the great difference in cost between the two films. Equipment is far more mobile and easier to handle, which makes for quicker results with a smaller personnel, and so another financial gain. The use of non-inflammable material would solve many financial and other problems in connection with storage and studios. And finally, there would be no dispersion of purpose; theatrical distribution being out of the question, there would be no humorous commentaries or appropriate musical backgrounds. At an average cost of £75 a reel one could produce 50 reels annually for under £4,000; while at an average cost of £50—a much more probable average estimate—one could produce the same number of films for £2,500. Even this figure may be considered to be an over-estimate, for while one could allow it for a single reel on a given subject, planning should be such that some subjects, such as a geographic survey, would cover several reels, in which case the average cost per reel could be much lower. (For example, the Dartington Hall Film Unit's four-reel North-West Derbyshire cost about £100, the three-reel South-West Peninsula less than £60, and the three-reel Norway To-day under £50, excluding travelling expenses and salaries; which is not to say that they would not have been a good deal better could more money have been spent on them.)

A Classroom Film Unit

I would advocate the foundation of a 16 mm. classroom film unit, its nucleus being a full time personnel of less than a dozen people, functioning under the Institute, the Board, or the Ministry. A good deal of the essential work would not be full time—consultants, experts on this or that, and so on. Possibly one might provide for student apprentices at a nominal wage in return for training; this would ensure a continuous source of replacement of permanent personnel. The first essential would be a careful survey and grading of all existing material. This to some extent is already being done by the Film Institute, and in more detail by the Scottish Film Council. By this means the necessary skeleton around which to plan future production would be created. At first it would be a dissipation of resources to reduplicate material which, while not first class, is good enough as a temporary expedient. Much later on a good many existing film subjects would no doubt be remade. But the first task would be to supplement what already existed—so that, for example, a complete survey of Great Britain by geographical districts could be completed. At the same time production schedules would be drawn up to cover agreed subjects, such as geography or biology. (This might well involve a twenty-year production programme!) What I envisage is a far more detailed and complete schedule than that mapped out for geography by the Institute's geography committee. Under the heading "Wheat", to take a random instance, would be perhaps twelve films, covering the needs of at least elementary, junior and senior schools, perhaps taking account of the different types of film needed for town and country children, and covering Canada or Russia as well as East Anglia. From these schedules scripts would be prepared, and production of the subjects most urgently needed begin. The selection of films—the proportion of senior to junior or elementary films, of sound to silent, geography to biology, and so on, are points of detail. It would pay, however, to cover junior and senior treatments of the same theme at the same time, where it was agreed that the subject should be covered for both age groups. The number that could be produced annually would depend on the available personnel; but from my own experience I should have said that, working full time and with adequate facilities, it should not be difficult for an experienced director to turn out ten films a year. Five such people could turn out fifty films a year, one a week, 250 new subjects for schools spread over five years. Such an achievement at so little relative cost is surely worth advocating. Unlike most films, classroom films do not on the whole tend to become obsolete.

Quid Pro Quo

But output would not stop here. International co-operation may seem a utopian consideration to discuss now, but in a world at peace the exchange of films, or the shooting of material to supplied scripts, is surely not inconceivable? English schools need films of Sweden, Swedish schools films of England. Must an English unit go to Sweden, a Swedish unit come to England? Surely it is more rational for the Swedish unit to shoot our material for us, in return for our shooting the English material for them? Or for us to supply Sweden with English films in return for Swedish films for English use? Ideally the former is the more satisfactory hypothesis, in practice the second more probable; either is valuable and economical under a planned system of production. Our hypothetical fifty annual films would not only form a valuable currency between ourselves and Australia or Sweden, but would in the process multiply themselves, so that the quinquennial 250 would become 500! The coffee of Brazil, the silk of China, the rubber of Malaya, the products of the whole Empire, are exchanged for the manufactured goods of Britain. Why not on celluloid as well as in reality? It is a cheap way to build up a library which in time would cover the world in all its diversity.

Another aspect of the work of this hypothetical unit would be to re-edit a great deal of existing material. Speaking again from personal experience, I would assert that there exists in this country a great deal of first-class pictorial *material*, but in such a form that it is less useful to teachers than it ought to be. Propagandist and advertising concerns —from the Ruritanian State Railways to the Paradise Fruit

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A JOINT EFFORT

The Stoke-on-Trent Secondary Schools' Film Association

This is the story of successful endeavour and fruitful work achieved in spite of difficult wartime conditions. If R. S. MILES, the author, can do it, why should not similar associations be formed all over the country and particularly in the comparatively safe areas? Teachers with energy are cordially invited to "Go to it": both the B.F.I. and Mr. Miles will give them every assistance in their power

DURING THE past winter a very interesting venture has been organised in Stoke-on-Trent. Briefly, it is the Stoke-on-Trent Secondary Schools' Film Association. Its success has, as yet, not been capable of precise assessment but if numbers and vocal enthusiasm are regarded as standards, then, indeed, the Association has been very successful.

As the venture seemed to solve many of the problems connected with school film societies it was thought desirable to give to readers of SIGHT AND SOUND a detailed description of the organisation in the hope that the fundamental ideas may be of use for adaptation to the various local conditions.

History

To place the Association in the correct perspective and to provide an excuse in advance against some of the criticisms which may be levelled against it, a short history is perhaps advisable. Last summer I determined to start a Film Society for my school. There were various obstacles to be overcome—primarily that of a projector. The school had not one of its own, but the Education Committee had one which was loaned to schools. I reserved this for certain weeks for school work and at the same time made observations for my embryonic film society. In order to obtain a suitable room I spent hours in the evenings last summer adapting old brush handles into blind rollers, which were then unobtainable, and making a seven feet square plywood screen (that was to be mainly for epidiascope purposes).

Meanwhile, I had been considering programmes and immediately came up against the usual spectre—finance. I have practically forgotten my calculations now and, retrospectively, it looks as though I must have placed much faith in the vague benefits of providence. I booked films. There were some early ones for the first programme—a Western, a Chaplin, a *Felix the Cat* cartoon and a *Silly Symphony*. For the next, *Night Mail* and *Weather Forecast*. We were to have for our next meeting a talk by a well-known local amateur (Mr. John Martin) on film making. For later programmes I had *Mediæval Village*, *Expansion of Germany*, *New Worlds for Old*, *Shipyard*, *Covered Wagon*, and a few others. I am rather dubious of the possible reception of some of the shows as then conceived. But this projected film society never materialised. The war supervened.

We were not at school for the first few weeks. My first programme had to be postponed for a month. Mr. Martin wrote to say that war conditions would prevent his travelling, and the Headmaster considered that it was not advisable to keep children at school for social activities on account of black-out conditions and the fact that many of the children had long distances to travel. My film society was in ruins although a wet games' afternoon did make it possible to give the first programme. The position was seemingly hopeless when I had what must be accounted a minor brainwave. I considered that even if my projected association had collapsed there might arise out of its ashes an even better one.

Why not a Secondary School Film Association to serve all the secondary schools in the district. One society for all secondary schools? Why not? The idea improved with consideration but so did the obstacles grow.

Obstacles

They were—the need for a suitable hall, centrally situated (because the Potteries is a sprawling district) and blacked out; the possibility of obtaining a projector; then, above all, the need for the co-operation of the schools and sufficient members to make it independent financially. There was no room belonging to the City Education Committee which was suitable. The only centrally situated school was occupied by troops. With this hypothetical society becoming even more of an obsession I had my second flash. It was to put the matter to the local Co-operative Society's Education Committee who had quite recently purchased a fine G.B. projector which was more powerful and up-to-date than that possessed by the City. I saw the secretary. It was a long shot because I had had no connection with the Society at all but I knew that a Film Society had been considered for Sunday evenings. The secretary was attracted and promised to put the matter to his committee. The committee agreed to the use of their projector and assembly hall which was centrally situated and equipped for film displays. The secretary of the Society also undertook most of the clerical work. All that was needed now was members.

But the Society is Formed

Time was passing. The next booking date was almost upon us. Therefore the secretary and I decided to make the Society a reality and hope for results. The idea crystallised as "The Stoke-on-Trent Secondary Schools' Film Association". Eleven schools were informed.

The circular stated that the intention of the Association was to show films not normally seen in commercial cinema programmes, and to stimulate the interest of secondary school children in good films. The response was moderate. About fifty names were sent in from four schools. This was not enough for our purpose but we decided to go ahead in the hope that the venture would advertise itself.

Developments

The first show consisted of *Night Mail* and *Weather Forecast*, which were well received. After this a further circular was despatched giving details of the first performance and asking the secondary schools to nominate a member of the staff to a committee to organise the subsequent shows. Four schools only responded but I had a telephone call from a headmistress to explain the reluctance of other schools. Primarily, several schools objected to "Secondary Schools' Film Association" when the secondary schools had not even been consulted. Again, some head teachers were afraid of political complications because of the part being played in the scheme by the Co-operative Society. Another bone of contention was that it was not really a secondary schools' society at all because Technical and Commercial schools of the city had been invited to join. I allayed fears on the political question and explained reasons for the other decisions. At the next meeting the original members were increased by others from their own schools and a contingent of boys from another school. For the next (January) meeting a girls' school sent a large number. Indeed our numbers increased at every meeting, even to the last, until they reached the total shown in the statement of accounts. This fact alone seemed to justify our project.

"Democracy"

For the next committee meeting each school had been asked to nominate one pupil member in addition to the staff member. This enlarged committee was a great success. Attempts to formulate a programme for the next few meetings were made. The pupils were not silenced by the presence of their teachers and came in with suggestions for films and for the conduct of the programmes. For example, I was asked not to go to the front and talk between reels. It was not popular.

The committee meet every month to discuss any problems arising from the last show and to make arrangements for the coming one. The pupils on the committee kept a register of attendance, collected fees, distributed membership cards and arranged seating. Thus they were of real help and were made to feel that the Association was being run by them and not for them.

Popular Programmes

The first two programmes were rather scrappy. The November one has been given, that in December consisted of *New Worlds for Old*, *Big Money*, and two sure winners, *The Rink* and *Barnyard Broadcast*. For the January show, we had the *Spider and the Fly* and *The Covered Wagon*. In spite of its age the long film held them and one seemed to be transported back to one's youth spent among cowboys and Indians whose exploits were broken by captions which were read aloud. They were in this case and there were real cheers for "our men". By the way, the audience was always asked if it would like to see the cartoon again and the answer was always "yes". If this long film held them they were even more thrilled and excited by *Kameradschaft* shown in February. It was most enthusiastically received, although some members complained that it was too terrifying. For March we were to have Miss Mary Field but pressure of war work prevented her coming at the last moment. However, she kindly sent along the films with which she was to illustrate her talk "The End of a Phase", but it was decided to show *Tudor Rose*, which was actually booked for another meeting, along with *The Expansion of Germany* and *Night Mail*. The substitutes, in spite of disappointment, met with general approval. The last arranged meeting was successful but even more so was the show which the education committee of the Co-operative Society put on at its own expense. On this occasion a *P.F.B. Cinemagazine* and *The Road to Life* were shown with a Buster Keaton comedy, *Tars and Stripes*.

Revelation

The reception given to *The Road to Life* was a revelation of the power of the cinema. At first the children were restless. The Russian dialogue, the captions and the unusual nature of the film required some understanding but when the "wild boys" were before the tribunal an absorbed hush fell upon them only to be broken by applause and laughter. Towards the end of the film where Mustapha meets his enemy attempting to ruin the railway they became most vocal and I heard one boy cry out, "Go on, sock him." At the end of the film the applause was loud, prolonged and spontaneous. The film had once more proved its ability to break down international barriers and convey an important message. This last show was the most heartening of the lot.

Debits and Credits

There we were at the end of our session and stock-taking was necessary. There could be no doubt that interest—great interest—had been aroused among the members. This was one of the largest items on the credit side. Other items to be put there were the co-operation which had been forthcoming between the various schools, as had been shown in the committee meetings and the full shows, the sense that the children were helping in a practical way to run the venture, the good-will of the Co-operative Society and its officials who never obtruded their propaganda but gave much of their time in addition to the loan of the projector and room. Perhaps most important of all was the fact that the films had been generally well received and a new field of cinema had been opened to an impressionable section of child population.

It must not be forgotten also that we learned much about organisation from our experience. One example of the co-operation referred to may be mentioned. We found that we were losing potential members because our time of starting and day of meeting were awkward for some schools which were working under difficulties because the boys' schools had been commandeered by troops and consequently they were using the girls' schools in relays with their rightful owners. On one day the girls began very early and finished at midday, on the next the boys did so, while on alternate days they finished as late as the black-out would allow. The matter and day was settled satisfactorily in committee, where the deciding opinions were those of the pupil members.

On the debit side there was a small deficit, as the balance sheet will show.

FILM ASSOCIATION

BALANCE SHEET

Income	£	s.	d.	*Expenditure*	£	s.	d.
Students' fees at 6*d.* each—158 members ...	3	19	0	Films ...	4	6	3
				Film postage ...		5	9
				Postage other than films ...		17	8½
	£3	19	0		£5	9	8½
Deficit ...	£1	10	8½				

It was decided to charge sixpence only because many of the children had long distances to travel to the meetings and consequently their capital costs increased.

Other items on the debit side were the rather scrappy nature of some of the programmes, individually in some instances, and as a whole (but this can be attributed to the rather opportunist character of the arrangements); and the black-out, for at least one head mistress forbade her pupils to be out after dark.

Film Appreciation

Perhaps the most important item on this side is the little attempt made to teach film appreciation. This last has been a much debated point. Every film has had an introduction in which has been mentioned much of importance in the film; it has also had a curtain in which reference has been made to outstanding points in retrospect, but we have not up to the present been able to encourage the children to do much talking or to go too deeply into principles of appreciation. One reason is that a group of about 150 children whose ages range from 11 to 18 does not form the ideal audience for such a thing. Separate groups or a small society would be better. Again it must not be forgotten that the children come primarily to see the films and that we do not wish to ruin the venture with too much talk resembling school. Our motto should be *Festina Lente*. I, personally, feel that these shows are preparing the ground for a fuller future appreciation of films. This matter has to be thrashed out in committee and I think that attempts will be made to improve matters in this respect.

Summary

Briefly summarised then, our organisation was a committee of teachers representing six schools, together with one pupil from each school. This met monthly to discuss problems arising from the previous show and to make the arrangements for the next. The shows given were not ordinary cinema ones for the films were carefully chosen and some points of importance emphasised.

Details of Programmes

November	*Night Mail, Weather Forecast.*
December	*The Rink, Barnyard Broadcast, New Worlds for Old, Big Money.*
January	*The Spider and the Fly, Covered Wagon.*
February	*The Man on the Flying Trapeze, Kameradschaft.*
March	*The Expansion of Germany, Tudor Rose, Night Mail.*
April	*P.F.B. Cinemagazine, Shipyard, The Making of Wedgwood, Private Life of the Gannets.*
Special Show	*P.F.B. Cinemagazine, Road to Life, Tars and Stripes.*

An essay competition has been instituted and is organised in three age groups: 12-14, 14-16, over 16. The subjects require critical appreciation of films seen at our shows and prizes have been given by the Secretary of the Burslem Co-operative Society, the Education Committee, various teachers and *Documentary News Letter*. A party at which they are to be distributed is being held. This, it is hoped, will not only break down some of the remaining barriers which still exist between the schools but will also clear the deficit.

More important still perhaps is the possibility of actually making a film, which at the moment is under discussion.

Continuation Certain

The Association is certainly going on next year and, although modifications of procedure in the light of experience will be necessary, the programme is in progress of compilation. The most important question is whether to have two meetings a month; one mainly films and little talk, the other mainly talk and a few films. Another question to be settled is the "blending" of each show, for our experience since Christmas has been that a "feature" film with accompanying shorts is the most popular.

This scheme does seem to have solved the difficulty of forming a film association for secondary school children where each school has not its own projector and of making this very important section of the population conversant with the best films and some of the principles underlying them.

Postscript:

During the typing of this I have been marking some of the essays and the standard of criticism is so poor that the need for the Association is underlined—as is the need for teaching of film appreciation.

ABOUT OURSELVES

The trials of a quarterly journal which tries to publish international news are very great these days. We had intended, for example, to print an article in this issue on French cinema propaganda in neutral countries, but this would now be a little out of date. We had also hoped to receive an authoritative and unbiased newsletter from Italy but, not unnaturally, this has failed to cross the Alps. At the time of going to press our little piece about India is still topical; we can only hope that it will still be so by the time you read these words!

THE MAKING OF A SCHOOL DOCUMENTARY

An interesting article by STUART BLACK, B.A., F.R.P.S.

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE of a certain County Council in a largely rural area has been a very progressive body, and its progressiveness landed it into a good deal of hot water. Some years ago it began to develop a policy of centralisation by erecting a number of large, well-equipped and modern schools at central points and gradually closing down the old inefficient village schools. Soon there came an outcry, from the ratepayers that their money was being wasted, and from the parents because the children were being "townified" and from all sorts of people in between these two who are inevitably opposed to change, especially if it is called progress.

This Committee felt that it must make some effort to combat these feelings, to justify its actions, and to show the really excellent results that it had already achieved and being a progressive body it naturally turned to the sub-standard film as the most obvious means of approach. Inevitably, however, it was very restricted in the amount that could be spent on the film, so three of us, who were interested in the educational side and keen on Cine work, were able to step into the breach and make the film for them. It occurred to the writer that some of the experiences, methods, and difficulties of this production might be of interest to others.

Scenario and Credits

One of us was the Scenarist and Editor, Producer, Director, Organiser and Liaison Officer; while the other two were Cameramen. We had one Ensign Kine-cam with an F.2.8 lens, a very stout tripod with pan top made from a second hand theodolite stand, an exposure meter and a lot of perseverance.

The scenario was first prepared, and this had of necessity to be a sketchy affair because we knew that a great deal of the work must depend on circumstances and we should have to take it as and when we could and dovetail it in afterwards. Roughly the scheme was this: To show first the bad ill-lit and over-crowded old schools and to contrast them with the new ones; then to show the curriculum of the new schools and the way in the "book-work" was subordinated to practical things related to the land in the case of the boys, and domestic science in the case of the girls; then to show the way in which the schools served their areas, and the benefits they were able to give in the way of clinics, physical training, games and general amenities, and finally to show how the children from wide areas were able to reach the schools, and the way in which the schools were placed relative to the communities, and how they were being increased in numbers.

Naturally the greater part of the film had to be that dealing with the curriculum, and here our greatest difficulty lay, as even the best modern schoolroom does not tend to give fully exposed negs. at F.2.8 except under the best conditions.

Our choice of material was more or less made for us in that we felt obliged to use neg-pos as several copies would be needed, then we all felt that where possible we must get the finest quality, so that for all the outdoor shots we decided to use a fine-grain pan, keeping some super-speed pan up our sleeves for cases of emergency. We also decided that the best apples must be at the top of the barrel, and that the opening and closing shots at least must astound the natives. This meant that we must use deep filters, and here again finance stepped in. However, a set of gelatins K2, G, and a reasonable red were chosen as being the most useful, and a trio of Woolworth two-pin electric plug covers in bakelite were bored out in the lathe to fit snugly on to the lens, and in each one a gelatin filter was stuck, so that we had an immediately interchangeable filter and lens-hood combined, and the three could be carried in a small cocoa-tin. This and the exposure meter were the only extraneous equipment we had.

Alas, Poor Tripod!

A short length of the chosen film was exposed through all the filters at various stops, and developed by hand to check up once and for all on the relative exposures, and these were all carefully tabulated with the meter so that by reference to our simple table the stop for a given filter could be read at a glance after taking the meter reading. This proved so accurate that we did not lose a foot of our outdoor shots from wrong exposures.

Following all the textbooks we had determined that every shot should be religiously taken from the tripod, but alas, this ideal soon had to go west for many of the best shots in the film could never have been made without the quick choice of the camera in the hand. Wherever possible we did use the stand, or some sort of support in the majority of shots, if only balancing the camera unfixed on the top of the stand or a wall.

Luckily time was not a factor of very great importance, but the bulk of the film was shot in the early summer and by good fortune we had a run of fine skies, so nearly all the outdoor shots were made with the Red or Orange filters and were really magnificent, and we also had a run of quite good weather while doing a lot of the interiors which made things as easy as possible. We soon realised from the meter that at the best we were up against it, and where we could get to the place easily again we ran off a short length on the school-room and developed it to see if there was any hope at all, and in most cases found it was just possible to get a tolerable result with the super-pan. As it was quite obvious that these results could not be of super-quality, we decided to make the most of suggestion and cutting, by using as little as possible of the long-shot material and filling out with small groups of children brought near to the windows and helped by reflectors and what lights there were. In practice this worked well, and I don't think anyone seeing the film would realise how much subterfuge there was in it.

In some of the old village schools we had the double difficulties of darkness and cramped space. In one we had

to shoot from well outside the window, using as long an improvised hood as we dared. In another we scored our greatest triumph, for it was one that our Director wanted very much to include, but we could get no reading at all. The only hope was the half-speed on the camera, so we explained it all to the teachers and started rehearsals in slow motion. This tiny room had three classes jammed in it, and we wanted to show how they were kept apart by drawing curtains across. After about three trials we got them all to work fairly well in slow motion, and turning on all the lights there were and opening all dors we shot it at half-speed. Both teachers and class responded wonderfully, and the shot is quite excellent (and undetectable) in the film.

Another interesting shot was a "run past" one at one of the larger schools showing a whole series of classes at work through the open windows. We rigged the camera up on a car and very slowly slid down a lucky slope with no engine, to save vibration, trying to keep a constant speed. We did this twice, once at the speed we thought it should do, and once at half that speed, which was lucky as the crawl proved much the more effective.

Painless Dentistry

Gardening, poultry, pigs, building chicken-houses, greenhouses, soil testing and analysis, sewing, cooking, washing and ironing, dress-designing, carpentry, chemistry and all such things were relatively easy as they could be suggested by small carefully lit groups. Close-ups of bee-keeping, however, gave us all a few anxious moments, but we came out scatheless.

Quite a few of the things were fortuitous accidents. For instance at one school we found the visiting dentist in full swing, and I think we did a bit of good by distracting his patients while we took close-ups of him and his victims. We got another fine shot by coming on the boys' bath house when the sun was in the only possible position, and getting some lovely shots of wet bodies under the shower. In another case we had a fine collection of kids in a swimming pool but nothing to lead up to it, and in quite another part of the County we met a charabanc load of boys going to bathe in the sea. We shot the lot as they disgorged and got a fine start for the former shots.

We found that, however carefully you planned, in work of this sort there were always things cropping up that *had* to be taken and fitted in afterwards. The section dealing with the means of transport, for instance, proved very interesting. The bulk of the children are picked up by special buses from fixed points, but they get to those points by all sorts of funny means. Of course the great majority walk, especially the younger children; large numbers use bicycles, some are taken along by parents on their farm carts or traps, a few ride in on horses or ponies and we even found one boy who did the bulk of his journey by rowing a boat across a river. Naturally these varied means of transport gave us a lot of delightful pictorial stuff to work with and we were able to use fine backgrounds of moorland, streams and lanes.

On the whole the children co-operated well, and in all cases we got the teachers to explain what we were going to do and what we wanted them to do, and in every case we stressed that they must not look at the camera. Actually we had no trouble on that score at all and the usual self-consciousness was not in evidence.

TO OUR READERS

Once again may we remind those who are not direct postal subscribers or members of the British Film Institute that it is absolutely essential for a regular order to be placed with their newsagent. Indeed, this will be the only way to ensure obtaining a copy of SIGHT & SOUND, *as war conditions have compelled us, in common with all other periodicals, to restrict "casual" sales as far as possible.*

Some of the most attractive of the indoor shots proved to be in the cookery classes and the preparing of the excellent dinners the children are given. The cooking utensils always take on lovely high-lights, and when carefully combined with such things as steam and running taps can give a really bright sequence. So can washing-day, especially the effect of a line of white clothes being hoisted against a vivid sky. We also found a lot of very effective material in the various gyms., where the patterns from ladders and other apparatus gave us some grand designs.

Unfortunately we had neither the apparatus nor the skill for the small amount of diagrammatic work that had to be included to show the growth of the schools over the area, and we had to rely on professional services. These, I am sorry to say, we did not find at all satisfactory as the people seemed obtuse, and the results were not at all up to the standard of the rest of the film. By judicious cutting and the insertion of shots of the individual schools we were able to gloss over these shortcomings.

The film was supposed to be a single reeler, and under the conditions of working none of us had any idea how much film we should use, but actually by a miracle we did not touch the thousand foot mark on our negative stock, and it turned out in the end that we had practically worked on a 2 to 1 basis, which we all considered far beyond our wildest hopes.

The editing was a difficult and tedious job, as there were so many interests involved as well as the one of choosing the best technical work. We had one complete print made and cut that solely and with great care. It was gone over and over, with both subject and quality in mind, and subjected to the most ruthless rejection on either or both grounds. When we were completely satisfied with the cutting of the positive, the negative was cut frame for frame to match it.

The Committee has been delighted with the film and it has amply justified the care and outlay, for it has demonstrated to the parents that their children were being well looked after and were being given an education that would really equip them for a country life, which they can approach with a more adequate knowledge of all its scope than ever the little village school could provide, with the best will in the world.

CONDITIONS IN INDIA

"If the war is to be projected effectively on the Indian screen, care in the choice of incidents and a vernacular commentary are indicated," suggests K. K. MURTHY in this reasoned article. Incidentally he also has some interesting things to say about conditions in Indian cinemas

It is well-known that the Indian film industry has grown up rapidly into the position of one of the country's major industries. Already it has been estimated that the capital invested amounts to over 15 crores of rupees, or £11 millions. The number of feature films produced in 1938 alone reached 182, while the personnel of the industry has been reckoned to be around 40,000. The number of cinemas (which was in 1928 put down at 713) has now risen to 1,265 for the whole of India, excluding Burma and Ceylon.

These figures are taken from a recent book on *The Indian Film* (Y. A. Fazalbhoy, 1939), which gives a good analysis of the internal organisation of the industry. Two writers in the *Indian Finance* Planning Supplement last year had pointed out that the burden of taxation on the film industry was in the neighbourhood of 33⅓ per cent. Mr. Fazalbhoy demonstrates that the smallness of the production units and their disorganisation have laid them at the mercy of the financier. Between the financier and the distributor the lion's share of the returns vanishes and the actual producer leads a precarious existence, chronically verging on dissolution.

It is interesting to recall that even in so rich a country as Britain, the financing of film production presented a difficult problem till recently and that the Moyne Committee had to deal with it at length in their survey. Combination among Indian producers, it is suggested, will enable them to build up much better studios and also to reduce their costs. At present there is no single studio representing an outlay of more than about 20 lakhs of rupees (£150,000), while the majority are worth about a tenth of that sum. Merger should thus be valuable in the interests of quality as well as economy.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to discuss the organisation of the film industry. Passing from the general to the specific, I should like to describe some styles of theatres we possess in parts of the country. It is obvious that our 1,265 picture houses are nothing to make a song about, compared to the 15,000 of the U.S.A. or the 4,350 of Britain. For while in those countries there is on an average a cinema for every 8,000 and 10,000 inhabitants respectively, in India the corresponding figure would be one for every 300,000 inhabitants. To reach the vast potential audience of the villages, it is evident that travelling cinemas are needed in far greater numbers than we now possess. At the same time, we must recognise that while travelling cinemas might be multiplied, there is little room in them for the provision of new amenities. But of the travelling cinema I shall have more to say later.

Betel Spitters

It must be admitted, besides, that many of our permanent picture theatres are more fitted for the scrapheap than for preservation. In the provincial towns of Travancore, for instance, the usual scheme is a rectangular structure, with rows upon rows of benches and chairs, often without a sloping floor and preceded by the bare floor in front for the "groundlings". In fact these groundlings, squatting in the sand and spitting betel all over it, are the best patrons of the exhibitor for they are the mainstay of the trade. It seems to me that better theatres will more or less automatically induce better manners in the audience and cleanliness can be achieved provided better amenities are provided. In the matter of fire precautions and convenient exits, too, these crude structures are defective.

There are at present some ten theatres in Madras devoted to Indian films. My acquaintance extends to only two or three. But I believe they are all more or less of a type. There are no groundlings; the cheapest seats are rough wooden benches in front, followed by rows of chairs of various types and prices ("stalls", shall we say) while above there is usually a "circle". In these theatres there is a moderate slope to the floor and vision from the back is satisfactory. The chairs are not always of the tip-up variety and ash-traps are rare. Plush chairs are unknown.

Bombay's Indian cinemas show some difference in design. The scheme is no longer that of the match-box and there is a real "circle" above the "stalls". Everywhere the circle is more expensive than the stalls; while, behind the circle but in continuation of it there is a "balcony" priced even higher. The most expensive seats are the "boxes" behind the balcony. They work out at about 3*s*. 6*d*. The cheaper seats are bare board, the rest covered with leather.

Revolving Fans

All the permanent picture theatres in India, crude or fashionable, have to have plenty of fans. In summer, most parts of the country are hot and even late at night fans are indispensable. But only two theatres in Bombay are air-conditioned—and both confine their presentations to foreign films. The Metro in Bombay is one of the finest theatres in India, with no rectangular nonsense about it and with the plush seats, carpets and unformed attendants that characterise the super-cinema. But even here I noticed that the rows of seats are more or less exactly in a line, giving you (remember Robert Benchley?) a pain in the neck peering round the head of the fellow in front. This theatre has broken new ground with its decorations, executed by Indian artists. But there is no small well-planned theatre like the Curzon or the Paris in London. Nor do we have any "repertory" cinemas or houses specialising in Continental films.

The publicity methods of these theatres are an interesting study. In the villages and small towns in the South, the travelling cinema literally drums its attractions into the minds of the people. A bullock or horse cart with a band goes round distributing handbills printed on multi-coloured paper. The children run after it every day collecting these handbills for making festoons and bunting. The repertoire of these bands may be limited, but they are nothing if not vigorous. During shows the band serves as orchestra, though I doubt if the band of our local cinema ever plays anything more dignified than the Marseillaise and Rule Britannia and a few other anthems. I am certain, however, that they do *not* play the Internationale!

In Madras push-carts with scenes from the film on cardboard cutouts are drawn about the streets and usually brought for the afternoons to the splendid Marina beach where fashionable Madras promenades in the evening. Latterly stills are displayed in the theatre "vestibules". I have seen these cutouts rearing their heads and shoulders, too, in front of several Bombay theatres. But evidently they do not push these about in Bombay.

Publicity

Newspaper publicity is not so important in India as yet, as most of the filmgoing public do not rely on newspapers. But the infection is spreading and Indian film producers and distributors do not hesitate to wallow in the hyperbole and the near-maudlin claptrap that are the stock-in-trade of film publicity elsewhere. Cross-publicity between theatres belonging to the same proprietor is not infrequent, but I have yet to see the distribution of programme cards in advance by single or "chains" of theatres.

Of actual pictures exhibited recently in various provinces, I have no space to write here, nor do I think any one individual could do that competently, considering the difficulties of language. By far the most promising film I have seen these days is Prabhat's *Admi* (*Man*) directed by Shantaram. No, there is more than promise in *Admi*. There is performance, all that we have expected of an original and imaginative director. But I need not stop to dilate on my personal predilections.

Before concluding this article, I should describe one relevant experience. Talking of the "mobile" cinema, I always feel a strange unreality when watching a story thrown on to a screen at one end of a tent under the open sky. The sound output is necessarily high, but that is not the main factor responsible for this unreality. There are gaps in the roof through which you see the stars in the deep blue summer sky; there are gaps in the sides through which the wind blows. It is these that spoil the fun, for they let in *reality*. Here is inconvenient reality breaking in upon sophisticated illusion. Inside the Odeons and Orpheums you manage successfully enough

to keep this intruder out. But here the escape is incomplete.

Shakespeare and the War

In such a tent a few days ago I watched Shakespeare presented to an audience mostly ignorant of English. There was a sprinkling of senior school boys to whom Shakespeare was at least a name. To the others, *Midsummer Night's Dream* had to appeal as a story, shorn of all poetry and competing on level terms with *Robin Hood* and Indian thrillers. Actually the film is a flop, but the audience sat through it with remarkable composure. The fairy sequences are at times attractive, especially when the little children come on the scene. These seem to have pleased. Strangely enough, Mickey Rooney's antics as Puck raised a laugh or two. Bottom's discomfiture, which seemed pointless cruelty in this version, was enjoyed by most of the audience. On the whole, it was a tiresome performance, and I think the audience was glad to see the end of it.

There is a superb if inconsequent iris towards the close when the fairies break up in the face of approaching dawn, and two fairies fade out in a ballet pose. When this was prolonged I feared people might get restive, but it went down. In fact the only actual instance of bad taste in the audience was the exhibitionism of my learned neighbour who insisted on accompanying Theseus in the hackneyed lines on the lunatic, lover and poet. Why must these people show off, even in such unresponsive surroundings?

There was a British Movietone reel along with this and I could feel the excitement of the audience at their first real glimpse of the actualities of this war. The naval patrol, a convoy, an aerial battle, all these were watched keenly, but one or two tame "news-flashes" fell flat. The commentary was, however, wasted. It seems to me that if the war is to be projected effectively on the Indian screen care in the choice of incidents and a vernacular commentary are indicated. It is the *mechanical* side of warfare that attracts the ordinary man, how it happens, not what or why. While I am glad that British newsreels are distributed at reasonable rates in the smaller towns, I feel insufficient attention is being paid to their content in relation to Indian audiences.

DOCUMENTARY COMMUNISTS

The Editor, Sight and Sound.

Dear Sir,

The incredibly ferocious fight over *The Birth of a Nation* is the bitterest affair of its kind since the Eisenstein-Sinclair feud over *Que Viva Mexico* in 1932-33. There have been few other battles like it in the stormy annals of the cinema. To appreciate the motivations and objectives of this new war, it is necessary to understand something of its background. This can be sketched briefly.

The American independent cinema, and to some extent the film industry proper, has been fairly overrun in recent years by a veritable horde of Communist Party agents, sympathisers, and fellow-travellers. The fanatical partisans of this movement are profoundly hostile to D. W. Griffith and to the classic-romantic tradition of cinema of which his name is the prime symbol. *The Birth of a Nation*, which they misinterpret as "Anti-Negro propaganda", is the pet hate and bugaboo of this entire crowd, and they never tire of denouncing Griffith for having made it.

If this was the whole story, it could be checked off quite simply to a dogmatic, herd-like grudge against a controversial and superbly arrogant film. Unfortunately, however, there is more to it than this. The resentment is not confined to *The Birth of a Nation:* this merely served to ignite the conflict and passion long brewing beneath the surface. The resentment is mainly directed against Griffith himself, who is hated by the Communist crowd for other of his works—notably at this time for *Hearts of the World*. You will no doubt recall that this was the propaganda film Griffith made for the Allies during the last world war. It was photographed and produced largely on the Western Front, under the auspices of the French and British governments. It featured Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Erich von Stroheim, George Siegmann and Robert Harron. The Communist faction in the American independent cinema, anticipating the growing popular demand for a nation-wide revival of this famous film, have started an intensive campaign against it—and against its maker. Their propaganda ties right in with the fight involving *The Birth of a Nation*. That is, they are playing off one film against the other, and playing off both films against the name of their creator.

The reality and scope of the menace of the Communist Party and its sympathisers in the United States cannot be overestimated. Through its innocent-front press, which is not easily identifiable by the average reader since it flies no banners and uses no slogans (the popular magazine, *Friday*, is a good example), the Communists form a cultural, as well as a political, fifth column, a veritable Trojan horse, in the full sense of the term. And, as you probably know, they are the outstanding force in America to-day striving to confuse the public mind on the issue of grand-scale aid to England and France in the present crisis.

In few fields of American life, however, have the nefarious operations of the Communists been more successful than in the cinema. Ninety-five per cent of the documentary film movement, to cite just one instance, is under their domination or control, and it is significant that the documentary film is being pushed and publicised not as a form of cinematic expression, but as a device for diverting public attention from the war in Europe to purely domestic issues. Against this Red fifth-column there has, of course, developed an active opposition. In the forefront, in the field of cinema, are G. W. Bitzer (Griffith's famous old cameraman), Barnet G. Braver-Mann, Kirk Bond, Theodore Huff and Seymour Stern. They are still old-fashioned enough to believe in the democratic way of life, and are doing all in their power to combat the poisonous creed of cynical materialism which the Communist termites are trying to inject into the main stream of film literature and film production. In this connection, they are naturally concerned with the task of saving the Griffith Tradition from the nihilistic criticism with which the Red forces are trying to strangle it. Thus, viewed from every angle, the situation in the American cinema is more complicated and strife-torn to-day than at any time within the past seven or eight years. There is an immense amount of double-crossing and back-stabbing going on, and it is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to know who is friend and who foe. But in the end, we who believe in democracy and the Western World are confident of victory, of beating and thoroughly destroying the entire Red-totalitarian machine.

I am, Sir,

Yours, etc.,

"Experimental Cinema."

Hollywood, California.
May 30th, 1940.

AN OFFER

The Editor, Sight and Sound

Dear Sir,

As the Honorary Secretary of a body which has dealt with the interest of amateur cinematographers for some eight or nine years now may I ask you to allow me to correct one or two small misstatements in the article by Mr. Darrel Catling in your Spring number. Firstly, Mr. Catling refers to *Home Movies* as an American publication but this is not the case. It is a British publication published by George Newnes Ltd. I imagine that Mr. Catling is confusing this with *Movie Makers* published by the Amateur Cinema League of the United States. Secondly, an amateur journal which he did not mention is the *I.A.C. Bulletin* which is published by this Institute and which has appeared more or less regularly during the whole of the existence of the Institute. For a short time I agree it was incorporated with the Journal of the British Institute of Cinematography which Mr. Catling does mention.

In conclusion may I say that if Mr. Catling or any of your readers would like any further information on matters appertaining to amateur cinematography this Institute will be very happy indeed to supply it.

Yours faithfully,

Leslie M. Froude,
Hon. Secretary.

Institute of Amateur Cinematographers,
40 Bedford Row, London, W.C.1.

FILMS IN THE COUNTRY SCHOOLS

A revival of interest in country life is long overdue, claims FREDERIC EVANS in this article, and the war has made it a fundamental necessity in more senses than one. He goes on to point out that, for teaching in country schools and as part of such a revival, there is no limit to the possibilities of the film

The evacuation of scores of thousands of children from the large towns into the rural reception areas raises anew the issue of the use of films in the country schools as an ordinary part of the illustrative aspect of education.

As a rule the country schools have not come very strongly into the movement for the use of educational films. The reasons are fairly obvious. The schools usually are small and the expense can therefore be only spread over comparatively few children. The accommodation does not often lend itself for adaptation to suit the display of films in the daytime. Transport and postal facilities for the hire of films are frequently inadequate or inconvenient. A supply of electricity may not be available and in small staffs, it is not so easy to find someone with the technical knowledge or with the enthusiastic flair for using projectors and overcoming the practical difficulties associated with their employment in schools.

Then again the countryside itself provides an unfailing source of actual example and illustration for teaching. Farming operations, the seasonal changes of the year, animal, bird and plant life, country industries—these and other things are, in varying types and degrees, almost outside the school door. Land forms, plant associations, geological occurrences—are of the essence of the countryside although it may be gently said that not always have our country teachers used to the full this wealth of example in the school environment.

How to Set About It

But education is something wider than a study of the environment, important though that may be. From the known we must proceed to the unknown and our experience *here* must help us to our knowledge *there*. Thus the wider experience which is offered by well chosen films should be made available not only to children in the large town schools but to country children as well. How should this be done?

It can only be done, in general, by a rational attack upon the disadvantages prevalent in country schools as far as film projection is concerned. With the development of reorganisation, large or fairly large central schools for the senior children are becoming available. With this centralisation the provision of premises and apparatus becomes much easier. The Cambridgeshire village Colleges show what vision and enterprise can do for senior education in the countryside. No central school, at least, should be designed without provision being made in the plans for a projection room which can easily be prepared for its special use, even if it has another purpose as well. The central schools, however, even in the country approximate more to the conditions in the large town schools and are therefore not our special consideration in this article.

Cinema Units

The smaller country schools can best be dealt with by a cinema unit moving from one school (or group) to another in turn. We have now in this country considerable experience with travelling film units. The lorry carrying the projector can be so designed as to provide the electrical current for the projector, living quarters for the driver and operator, and for the storage of screen, films and the rest of the apparatus. The "daylight" type of screen is best, with which films can be shown in rooms only slightly darkened or even not darkened at all. This type of screen would be quite efficient with the smaller rooms and audiences which would be available for films displays in country schools.

Such units would be a concern for county authorities in almost every case and they could also carry films to be shown to the village and farmer folk on such things as horticulture, modern dairying, health, poultry keeping, bee keeping, and similar activities for which the county health and agricultural committees are responsible. Spread over all the educational responsibilities of a county such film units need not represent, for any one purpose, a particularly heavy cost. It is certain that the education thus provided for all needs would repay its costs many fold in increased efficiency and prosperity in the countryside.

Joint Syllabuses

As to school films used by such units, these can quite easily be standardised without unduly prejudicing the traditional British freedom in the school curriculum. It would be no hardship to ask a joint committee of Head Teachers to arrange their syllabuses so that, for example, the geography of the British Isles was being studied at the same time by children of a particular age. Thus films illustrating living and environment in the British Isles could be appropriately shown by the film unit in a number of schools during a particular term. The schools could have, beforehand, and when they prepare their syllabuses, synopses of the educational films which the travelling film unit could present.

Obviously, the passage of the seasons would control fundamentally some of the subjects studied in a particular time of the year and there need be no difficulty in co-ordinating all syllabuses in a group of schools, by common agreement, so that subjects which lend themselves to film illustration can be adequately demonstrated. With such co-operation and co-ordination the right supply of educational films would be forthcoming and the present vicious circle of no films no projectors, no projectors no films, be at last broken.

Teachers' Commentaries

The films could be of the talking kind. Especially would these be perhaps more suitable for the exhibitions to adults, for the exhibitions of films to them should also contain entertainment films as well and these could, of course, be used, when suitable at school shows. But talking films would not be essential for school purposes. Indeed a commentary spoken through a microphone into a loud speaker near the screen by a member of the school staff is even to be preferred to a recorded commentary. The danger from a film unit coming into a country school and which completely ousts the existing staff is obvious. The children would think their teachers did not know the things which were being said because the recorded voice of someone else was saying them. If, however, one of the teachers spoke the commentaries through a microphone, the whole performance becomes essentially one belonging to the school and not to "outsiders" who are seldom popular or understood in the country.

Exceptions To Prove The Rule

Exception would be made, of course, to films where recorded sound is essential to the giving of a complete picture of the scene. The sounds in a great mill, in a mine, on a fishing vessel or the speech of a famous personality—these essentials of the film could still be given "off the record". But there is no reason why the outside commentator should not be a teacher and the films should be made and the apparatus designed to make this possible. I consider this point to be of greater importance in the country school than in any other school. Furthermore, the method makes the teachers themselves more ready to work in the film with their normal oral lessons and, be it said, assists them in that perennial self education which is essential to teachers, especially if they are to keep fresh in their work.

Revive Country Life

There is no end to the possibilities of such a development. Art and music, literature and science could be demonstrated attractively and accurately to children who now lack the opportunities of the museums, concerts, dramas, art galleries and libraries of the towns. Such activity should be an essential part of the new interest in the countryside and in life in the country which must come when the war is over. A revival of the country life is long overdue. The war has made it a fundamental necessity in more senses than one.

THE BRIGHTER VISION

Enterprise has brought a new interest to many people in a certain institution, according to this article by FERGUS MOORE. Here is just one more example of the infinite capacity of the cinema to assist in difficult times. A projector is easy to control and easy to work: it would be a heaven-sent gift to any hospital or convalescent home for soldiers

Once a week, from September to April, a cinema performance is given to an unusual type of audience. The scene is a large workhouse infirmary on the outskirts of London, and the audience is composed of as many of its eighteen hundred inhabitants—patients and inmates—who are well enough to attend this much-appreciated break in their monotonous existence.

Bye-Laws No Bother

The main dining-hall, measuring approximately 120 feet by 60 feet, and accommodating 650 people, has been adapted for the purpose of picture projection, yet surprisingly little alteration was required. Certain acoustic faults were met by the hanging of curtains and the laying of a broad strip of carpet; bye-law requirements were fulfilled by the maintaining, at the times of the performances, of a four-feet wide gangway, the clamping of the front and back rows of seats and special lighting requirements over exits. The building of the fire-proof projector room was, in actual fact, the only structural alteration to the existing room.

The equipment consists of a standard Gaumont-British projector, with an acoustic talking apparatus; a dual gramophone, connected to the two loud speakers of the talking mechanism, is used for the transmission, during intervals between the pictures, of gramophone records of vocal and instrumental music. Two of the engineering staff, who have been specially trained for the purpose, act as operators, acting under the supervision of the chief engineer of the institution.

Let George Do It!

The programme lasts for approximately three hours. It commences with half an hour of relayed gramophone records of the popular type, Gracie Fields and George Formby being, apparently, the most favoured vocalists. The main picture of the evening is then shown, varying in length from fifty to eighty minutes. An interval of ten minutes then follows, devoted to another relay of gramophone records, after which is shown a nature film. Following on a short interval a comic picture is shown, and the performance winds up with the news reel.

Economic reasons, among others, influence the choice of films. None of these is in the first bloom of youth, yet each is new to the majority of the unusual audience for which it is exhibited. The news reel, the feature which is most inclined to "date", is, of necessity, a fortnight old, yet it suffices for those whose contact with the outer world is but infrequent.

Factors other than those of economics have, of course, to be considered in the choice of pictures. Many of the audience are both sensitive and highly impressionable and as such their feelings, and their physical and mental conditions, have to be taken into account whenever exciting, morbid, or ultra-pathetic subjects figure in the programme. Uncontrolled and almost hysterical laughter, for example, greet the comic characters, while restlessness and sleeplessness—to the point of necessitating sedative medicines—may be the aftermath of films which portray murders or war episodes. More than one enthusiastic and constant attender at these performances has had to be deprived of her weekly treat by reason of the unexpected effect which the dramatic episodes had upon her.

Optimism

In the main, however, the production, which, it is interesting to note, is among the earliest of its type in the country, has had a beneficial effect upon the mental and physical well-being of this isolated community. The desire to attend each performance has stimulated an optimism in some of those who might not, otherwise, feel inclined to be "up and about," and the subject-matter of the more important films in the programme forms a topic of conversation in the grounds and in the day-rooms of the institutions.

And Overtime

It has been found, in actual practice, that the running of these installations is not prohibitive, once the original equipment has been obtained and the necessary adaptations made to the room, or hall, in which the projection is to take place. The cost for current may be regarded as negligible, in return for the value provided and the amount expended on hire of films is largely dependent upon judicious choice. Overtime wages will, of course, have to be paid to those of the engineering staff who are willing to remain on duty for the extra hours, and some arrangement must be made with certain of the nursing staff to accompany and attend upon, such of the infirm, or aged, members of the audience as may require supervision, although many members of the nursing staff may be found to undertake this latter service voluntarily.

(*Continued from page* 23)

I Was An Adventuress, a very bad film, is mentioned here only because it marks the return of Erich von Stroheim as an actor on these shores again. I will spare the reader the gentle irony of the situation and say only that the plot, about a trio of jewel thieves, allows him and Peter Lorre some droll moments which makes the spectator almost think that these two are kidding the whole thing. Seen for this reason or for the spectacle of two of the finest talents of the screen being put through their paces by a hack director, it is a curiously amusing thing. But Hollywood will have to redeem itself by putting von Stroheim in complete command of a picture again so that he can prove, as he once so memorably proved, that he can still outdirect them all. Hollywood can afford to be generous and it could use a good measure of the integrity and beauty he once gave the American screen.

(*Continued from page* 27)

Packing Company, are anxious to advertise their wares and their attractions, and would be more than willing—are more than willing—to allow such material to be edited for special purposes. This fertile source of material has as yet hardly been tapped, and is obviously important. Much of the material in the Empire Film Library comes into this category. It contains much potentially good material edited with little or no conception of classroom needs in a good many cases.

The above is no more than a sketch, and a sketch of one aspect only, namely production. There are extremely important questions related to distribution; whether for example it should be free or not, or whether there should be regional libraries as opposed to a national central library. These are questions which would have to be worked out in detail before this dream can become reality. All I am concerned with here is to suggest that, with adequately sponsored planning, a working solution can be found to the problem of future supply of classroom films, a solution that has infinitely more potentialities than the vague hope that somehow or other things can go on as they are. Modern education now cannot well do without its films. How else can it be assured of getting them than by such means as I suggest?

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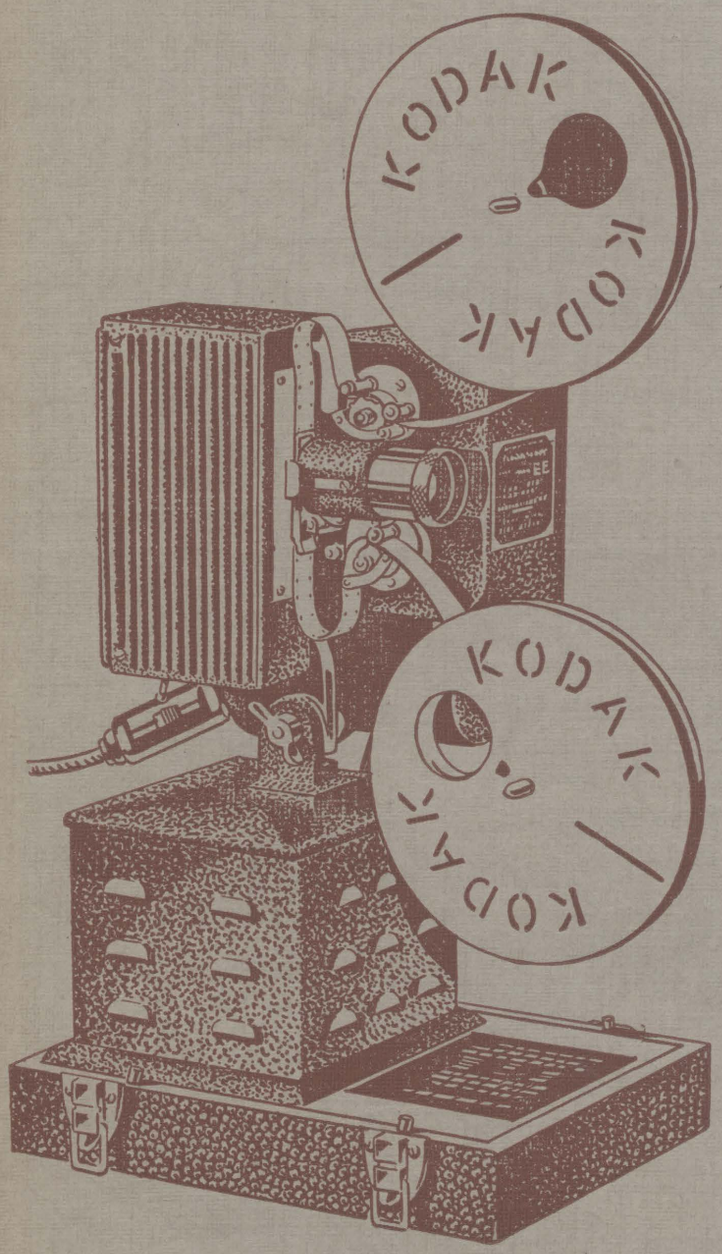

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